

No. 22. For Christmas Day.

Luke 2d, 11th.

Unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a
Saviour which is Christ the Lord.

At the institution of the Pasover, to commemorate
God's mercy in saving the lives of the Children of Israel
"by a great deliverance," Moses instructs them to
perpetuate the memory of this signal Event to future
"generations; it shall come to pass," says he, "when
"your children shall say unto you, what mean you
"by this service? that ye shall say unto them, it is
"the sacrifice of the Lord's Pasover, who passed over
"the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when
"He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses."
Is the question proposed to us why we celebrate this festi-
val? We answer, it was instituted by the Church of
God, as a religious & thankful commemoration of the
great benefit of our Saviour's Incarnation—his taking
our nature upon Him for our Redemption. "It
"came into the heart of Moses to visit his brethren.

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"the children of Israel." "Blessed be the God & Father
"of our Lord Jesus Christ," that He came, as on this
day, "to visit us in great humility," in order to
"redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto
"Himself!" "As the king of Israel descended from
"his chariot, put off his royal apparel," and in a
less distinguished habit, entered the battle; so did the
Redeemer of men divest himself of his heavenly glory,
come down from the throne of his majesty, clothe him-
self with the flesh of mortality to conquer our enemies
and to rescue us from their power. This is the mean-
ing of our "keeping this feast unto the Lord, & of our
"having an holy convocation or assembly," on this
"bright auspicious day. "For unto us was born this day
"a Saviour who is Christ the Lord."

When God, in the beginning, "laid the founda-
"tions of the earth, when He laid the measures there-
"of, and stretched the lines upon it, the morning stars
"sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for
"joy;" they admired, praised, and adored the power,

wisdom, and goodness of God which were so conspicuously displayed in the works of the creation. And, if ever there was a day on which God's almighty power, his incomparable wisdom, and his infinite goodness appeared again, as it did at the creation of the world, surely it was on this day, when "the Son of God took upon Him our flesh," to repair the breach between God & man, & to "make all things new." For, can we doubt that, God, who contrived the scheme of our Redemption, to have his justice satisfied, and yet to let his mercy rejoice, was pleased with this day, on which our Saviour came into the world with that body which his Father had provided Him? "Go, I pray thee," said Jacob to Joseph, "and see whether it be well with thy brethren." But God, knowing the wretched condition mankind was in without a Saviour, sent his Son, not to enquire after our welfare, but to procure "eternal Redemption for us." And, as at the creation of the world, "the Sons of God shouted for joy," so they again rejoiced at the birth of Him by whom the world

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was made. For no sooner had the Angel of the Lord delivered his message, "those glad tidings of great joy" to the shepherds, "but suddenly there was with Him" "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and" "saying—Glory be to God in the highest, and, on" "earth, peace, good-will towards men." And the ground of our joy, and the reason of this Anthem being sung by the choir of Heaven, is expressed in the words of my Text, For unto us is born, &c.

In discoursing on these words, it will be necessary to enquire who the Saviour is, declared by the heavenly Herald, and what are the offices He sustained to entitle Him to this high character—secondly, who are the people He came to save:—After which I shall conclude with some reflections suitable to this day's solemnity.

He, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, was no other than both God and man: "God, of the substance of his Father, begotten" "before the world; and man, of the substance of his

" mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect
 " man: and as the reasonable soul and flesh is one
 " man, so God and man is one Christ."

It was expedient that our surety should be man, because He was to perform that perfect and exact obedience which God required of us; that thereby having sanctified our nature in Himself, God might once more look upon and be pleased with it; and He now, in Heaven intercedes with his Father, to impute His righteousness to us, and to accept of it instead of our imperfect performances. Now, had He been only God, He would have been free from all subjection and could have paid no obedience—" being equal to his Father, as touching his Godhead:" but then, He, having assumed our nature, his Father was greater than He—" being inferior to his Father as touching his manhood:" & in this capacity, " Christ came into the world to do the will of God & yield obedience to Him."

Again, as obedience is a debt we owe to God, & God having decreed that his justice should be satisfied,

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"it behoved Christ to suffer and then to enter into his
"glory." But the Godhead is of that infinite perfec-
tion that it cannot suffer; so that if he had had no
other nature, He could not have paid that debt for us,
the punishment due to sin. It was also fit that God's
justice should be satisfied in that nature which had trans-
gressed, and that the same nature should suffer the pu-
nishment which had incurred the guilt. And there-
fore so transcendent was the love of the Son of God to-
wards the sons of men, that rather than they should
still lie under the power of death, He resolved at an
appointed time, by becoming incarnate, to accomplish
our salvation.

But then, that our Redemption should be com-
plete, our Redeemer was to be God as well as man.
For had He been only man, why would not the sentence
have been pronounced against him as well as against
the rest of Adam's posterity? "Thou shalt surely die;
"for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return:"
and if so, "instead of saving others, He could not

"have saved Himself." But suppose Him to have been created innocent, and to have retained his Innocency, he could not have made "satisfaction for the sins of the whole world:" it could be no sufficient ransom for those innumerable multitudes that "were to be redeemed to God, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Besides, could man or angel have wrought our Salvation for us, it was not fit that we should owe our salvation to any other person than to Him who had created us: because the value of our Redemption, being more than that of our creation, it would engage us to love our Redeemer more than our Creator: and therefore, in the work of our Redemption, God would not give us occasion to love an angel or a saint, better than Himself. The Son of God, who "sits at his right hand, by whom he made the world, He must restore all things," that the blessings of our creation, redemption, and all other good gifts might meet in Him, and we be thereby obliged to "love Him with

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"all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind,
"and with all our strength."—"The Church,"
says St. Paul, "is purchased with God's own blood."
Thus is our Redemption wrought out by Him who
is "the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of
"kings, and Lord of lords!"

By considering the Offices our Saviour sustained
we shall the better understand how, and in what sense,
He may be said to save us.

He was a Prophet: This word, in a strict
sense, signifies one who is enabled, by the Holy Ghost,
to foretell things to come. Our Saviour foretold the
manner of St. Peter's death, and the long life of St.
John. But, in a larger acceptation, the word is
put to denote a person who is endowed with power, to
interpret and make known the will of God. St. John
acquaints us how well qualified He was for this office,
"He was in the bosom of the Father." He made a
full declaration of his Father's will, in those sermons,
parables, and discourses, which we find recorded in the

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four Evangelists. He taught upon what terms and conditions blessedness was now to be had under the dispensation of the Gospel. He revealed some commands of God, which were before, either not at all, or so obscurely revealed in the old testament, that men thought themselves not obliged to observe them. He freed many texts from the false glosses which the Pharisees had put upon them; and, as the Apostle speaks, "He brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." He instituted sacraments, and ordained a ministry to convey the blessings of Religion to succeeding ages.

He was a Priest: Man, having incensed and provoked God's justice, by a continued course of sin, it was highly necessary, that, in officiating for us with God, our Mediator should render Him some great and honorable reparation in our behalf; and the greatest reparation He could make was to take our punishment upon Himself, and offer up his own life to God as a sacrifice for our sins. Had God required the punishment of those that had sinned, the whole race of man-

kind must have been destroyed: And He would not pardon us without some commutation for the punishment that was due to his justice, that he might preserve and maintain the authority due to his laws. Upon which account his infinite wisdom and goodness found out this expedient, that some other person should suffer in our stead; and so we might not be destroyed, neither our sins go unpunished. Jesus Christ gave "himself
 " a ransom for us, and, by that one oblation of himself
 " once offered, he made a full, perfect, and sufficient
 " sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the
 " world."

He was a King: He came into the world indeed in a low condition, very different from that of a Prince. He not only humbled himself in taking our nature upon Him, but was born of mean parents, who could not bring a lamb, and, therefore, at his presentation in the temple, they offered for Him "a
 " pair of turtles." And yet the Prophet Isaiah truly styles him "the Prince of Peace." The Angel Gabriel

told his mother that "He should reign over the house of
 "Jacob for ever." He obtained in his human nature an absolute power and dominion; whereby "He
 "became Lord and Christ; the Prince and Saviour
 "of his people." And this was according to what
 he had told his Apostles before his ascension, "all
 "power is given me in heaven and in earth;"
 by virtue of which He established a church on
 earth.

And he had a power to send down the Holy
 Ghost to guide and direct it. "When the Comforter
 is come, whom I will send from the "Father, He
 "shall teach you all things"—By this spirit, He con-
 ducts his subjects, if they will submit to his direction, into
 the way that leadeth to eternal life. "The Son of man
 "hath power to forgive sins," and He applies a par-
 don to every one who conscientiously embraces his Gose-
 pel: we are the purchase of his blood, and the trophies
 of his victory; and, "if we are faithful unto death,
 "He will give us a crown of life."

Let us consider more particularly the persons for whom He was born. "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." These words were spoken to a few shepherds, "who were keeping watch over their flocks by night." Now these shepherds were Jews; which people expected a Saviour to be born of and for their own nation. But they were so much for keeping Him to themselves that they denied Him to the rest of the world; as if "God was still to be known & worshipped in Jury only." And if "He had not been a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel, these glad tidings of great joy" would have been nothing to us, who were "strangers to the common wealth of Israel." But blessed, for ever blessed, be the God of all consolation, who sent his Son "to give light to all who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death;" "We were all concluded under sin;" & since, "the wages of sin is death," we were to suffer eternal punishment, from which human means could suggest no deliverance. We were all

in the same condition, and no one could take upon Him to satisfy for others who stood in need of a Saviour himself; and therefore, had not He, who was both God & man, undertaken & paid our ransom for us, we must have been liable to the wrath of an incensed God.

Having considered by whom we are redeemed, and, that it was to deliver us from eternal punishment, Jesus Christ, as on this day, "left the glory which he " had with the Father before the world was," may I not address you in the words of our Saviour to his disciples "will ye also go away?" and answer for you all, "Lord! to whom shall we go? Thou hast the " words of eternal life."

I shall beg your attention whilst I make some reflections suitable to this Day's Solemnity.

That God should leave the Throne of his Glory, and condescend so far as to take upon Him our flesh—that He should purchase for us so great an inheritance—what tongue of men or of Angels can suffici-

ently admire it, & make any suitable returns of praise?

"He took not on Him the nature of Angels but

"He took on Him the seed of Abraham." Yet at

"his birth the Angels called upon one another to give

"glory to God." And shall we, for whose sake He

came down from heaven, be insensible of his Love?

Surely it ought to fill our hearts with a lively sense,

and our mouths with a due acknowledgement of his

Mercy! "A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be

"thankful," to behold the goodness & favours of God,

to recount his mercies, and to hope for a continuance

and increase of them. To obtain which, let us consider,

(2dly) That we are required to live, not only

in the profession, but under the influence of Christiani-

nity. We are to regulate our actions, our desires, our

thoughts by the word of God. God is no more reconciled to

sin now, than He was before the coming of our Saviour,

neither is Christ less a professed Enemy to Satan.

"There is no more concord between Him & Belial, than

"there is communion between light & darkness;" nay,

the very end of his "manifestation in the flesh, was to
 "destroy the works of the devil." In this new & blessed
 covenant, He offers his purchased blessings upon con-
 dition of our entering faithfully into his service; He
 expects us to "die unto sin & live unto righteousness."

(3dly) We may learn how odious is sin in the
 sight of God, by the greatness of the person of our Mes-
 diator. God, of his mercy, did not banish us his pres-
 ence for ever, but He would admit no less person than
 his own beloved Son to mediate between Him & us,
 and would accept no less ransom than that of his life.
 Considering then that "God sent his only-begotten Son
 "into the world that we might live through Him,"
 we should enquire seriously of ourselves whether the end
 of his mission be answered. He has made our obedi-
 ence to be our interest as well as our duty. He
 forbids us nothing but what is unbecoming our nature,
 and destructive of our present as well as future happi-
 ness: but He has not left it to our own choice whether
 we will obey Him or not. Let us therefore be per-

suaded not to make such a trial of his mercy as to transgress his Laws and "cast his commandments behind us." If a Saviour be born to us, let us, from this day, labor to have an interest in his Merits. Let the day on which the Son of God took upon Him our flesh, be the day on which we become true and sincere Christians. And to strengthen our resolution and increase our faith, let us all "with one consent, commemorate his nativity, by partaking in the Holy Sacrament of his body and blood: thus, by "going on from strength to strength, when He shall appear the second time unto Salvation, we may also so appear with Him in glory." Which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

Theoph^o. J. St. John.

Entered at Stationers Hall.

W.